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Palestinian Artist Emily Jacir Says Her Berlin Talk Was Canceled

Earlier this week, Palestinian artist **Emily Jacir** said a talk she had been scheduled to give in Berlin was canceled.

While Jacir did not name which talk, what venue, or who had organized it in her post to her Instagram story, the artist's claim appears to match a shift in the participant list for "Images of History in Contemporary Art," a project and workshop being staged by the University of Potsdam at the Hamburger Bahnhof, a museum in Berlin.

According to its description, the project deals with "research of history in art after the end of the Cold War." Its related events began Thursday at the Hamburger Bahnhof and continue Friday.

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Jacir, who won the Golden Lion at the 2007 Venice Biennale, was named as a participant in **an e-flux announcement** about the event sent on October 16. Other participants included artist Simon Starling, Hamburger Bahnhof deputy director and head of collections Gabriele Knapstein, and philosopher Byung-Chul Han. **What appears to be an archived version of the conference's announcement** from October 5 also includes Jacir.

Yet Jacir's name no longer appears **on the website for "Images of History in Contemporary Art,"** even as the other participants seem to remain the same. Information indexed on Google for a prior version of the website registers an entry for a conversation to be held between her and Catherine Nichols, a curator with the Hamburger Bahnhof. Now, the website says Nichols will be in conversation with Starling.

Jacir and the University of Potsdam did not immediately respond to requests for comment. A Hamburger Bahnhof spokesperson directed *ARTnews* to the university, saying that the museum was not an organizer of the event.

On Instagram, Jacir has gained an audience for reposting pro-Palestinian messages. In addition to creating films, photographs, and installations, Jacir co-founded the Dar Yusuf Nasri Jacir for Art and Research, an arts center in Bethlehem, the West Bank, that she said was damaged by Israeli forces in 2021. (Israel denied having led a raid on Dar Jacir in a ***New York Times* profile of the institution**.)

The situation recalls another recent event in Germany that surrounded the Frankfurt Book Fair, where the Palestinian author Adania Shibli was slated to receive a prize before Litprom, its organizer, **called off the award ceremony**. Litprom said that it had canceled the event "due to the war started by Hamas, under which millions of people in Israel and Palestine are suffering" while also acknowledging "the accusations and defamations made against the author and [her] novel in parts of the press as unfounded."

More than 600 artists, writers, and editors decried the decision to cancel the event in an open letter. Meanwhile, the artist collective Cooking Sections pulled out of another event held by the fair in response to the cancelation.

The cancelation followed the October 7 attack by the militant group Hamas that killed over 1,400 Israelis, injured over four times that amount, and involved taking at least 199 more Israelis hostage. Afterward, Israel began to bombard Gaza, launching air strikes and threatening a full-scale invasion. The Gazan Ministry of Health has stated that 3,785 Gazans have been killed, with more than four times that amount injured.

As rallies in support of Israel and Palestine have proliferated across the world, Germany has cracked down on such protests. German authorities **made attempts to ban these actions** altogether, though many have still taken place anyway. On Wednesday, the city of Berlin said that at least 174 people were arrested and that 65 police officers were injured at one unauthorized pro-Palestine demonstration.

Within the German art world, issues surrounding the conflict between Israel and Palestine have historically been a point of contention. Last year's Documenta, curated by the Indonesian collective Ruangrupa, faced **widespread claims of antisemitism** in response to the inclusion of Palestinian artists at the alleged exclusion of Israelis as well as the presence of works that many said featured anti-Jewish caricatures.

That controversy continues to haunt both the storied art exhibition and Ruangrupa itself. Earlier this month, after the October 7 attack, Documenta issued a statement **publicly denouncing two members of Ruangrupa** whom the exhibition claimed had liked, then unliked, social media posts in support of Palestine.

Die Welt's Boris Pofalla **called** the alleged liking of these social media posts an example of how the art world has "allowed anti-Semites into its institutions and declared propaganda to be important." He singled out an Instagram story by Jacir in which she posted what she said was an Israeli woman who had been kidnapped by Hamas, along with text reading, "This captured settler looks happy. I hope they feed her a good Palestinian dish," **according to *Artnet***.

Jacir is among the hundreds of artists who **signed an open letter** this week in support of “Palestinian liberation and call for an end to the killing and harming of all civilians, an immediate ceasefire, the passage of humanitarian aid into Gaza, and the end of the complicity of our governing bodies in grave human rights violations and war crimes.” Others include Kara Walker, Tania Bruguera, Rirkrit Tiravanija, Issy Wood, and Ali Cherri.